



Frequently Asked Questions Edmund S. Muskie Graduate Fellowship Program

Question: Why is the US government interested in funding programs enabling citizens of Eurasia to study in the United States?

Answer: The US government believes that individual exchange programs are one of the most effective methods of fostering mutual understanding and good relations between the United States and other countries.

Question: Am I eligible to apply for the program if I am a fourth- or fifth-year student at university?

Answer: No, applicants must already have their bachelor's degree (US equivalent) at the time of application.

Question: Can I apply for the Muskie Program if I already have a master's degree?

Answer: Yes, you may apply if you already have a graduate degree.

Question: Can I apply if I received my bachelor's degree abroad?

Answer: Yes, you may apply if you earned a bachelor's degree (US equivalent) from a country outside of Eurasia.

Question: Is there an age limit for participation?

Answer: There is no set age limit for the Muskie Program, as long as applicants meet the technical eligibility requirements.

Question: Can I still apply for a particular field of study if my undergraduate degree is in something different?

Answer: Yes, your undergraduate degree may be in a different academic field than your graduate field. Applicants to the field of law, however, must have an undergraduate degree in law. Please keep in mind that the selection committee will be looking for candidates who can demonstrate knowledge and have experience in their chosen field.

Question: Am I eligible to apply if I have little to no work experience?

Answer: Yes, as long as you meet the technical eligibility requirements. However, please keep in mind that the selection committee is looking for candidates who are well versed in their field and prepared for graduate study.

Question: Can I apply for Muskie if I have already been in the United States as a participant on a USG sponsored program like FLEX or UGRAD?

Answer: Yes, however, applicants will need to have fulfilled their two-year home residency requirement. If you have participated in a US-government sponsored program in the United States for a duration of more than six weeks within two years of the application deadline then you are not eligible to apply for the program this year.

Question: Am I eligible to apply if I am a citizen of one Eurasian country (ex. Kazakhstan) but a legal resident of another Eurasian country (ex. Ukraine)?

Answer: No. You must currently reside in your country of citizenship in order to be eligible for the Muskie program.

Question: Do I need to already have TOEFL, GRE or GMAT test scores?

Answer: No, selected semi-finalists will take necessary exams.

Question: What is a good score?

Answer: There is no set score limit. Score ranges vary for each exam. Additionally, each university has different requirements for score results.

Question: Can the Muskie Program sponsor my education if I've already enrolled with a US university on my own?

Answer: No. Furthermore, at the time of application, you must reside in one of the 12 participating countries and in the country where you are a citizen. The Muskie program cannot sponsor your education at a university where you have applied and been accepted independently. Participants cannot select their university placement.

Question: What is the selection process and what are the main selection criteria?

Answer: The Muskie Program is conducted as a merit-based open competition. After the deadline, all eligible applications will be reviewed by a bi-national panel of academics, regional experts, and alumni. Chosen semi-finalists will be interviewed in their home country by a bi-national committee of US academic specialists, program alumni, and US embassy representatives. Selected semi-finalists will take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), as well as the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), if applicable, in early 2012. Program finalists and alternates will be chosen based on results of the initial application review, interview committee, and test scores. IREX staff provides administrative support only and does not vote in the final selections.

Selection panels will use the following criteria to evaluate applications (not in order of importance):

- Academic excellence
- Flexibility and suitability as a graduate exchange student
- Relevant work experience
- Demonstrated leadership potential
- Proficiency in written and spoken English
- Commitment to returning to their home country in Eurasia after program completion and to sharing the benefit of the program with their community
- Preference will be given to those applicants from outside capital cities
- Preference will be given to applicants who have not had prior US study abroad experience

Question: During the selection process, will preference be given to candidates with some study experience in the United States, or to those who had no such prior opportunity?

Answer: Preference is given to individuals who have had little or no prior opportunity to study in the United States. However, qualified individuals who have prior US study experience are still eligible to apply.

Question: During the selection process, will preference be given to applicants from the capital city or from the regions?

Answer: Preference is given to qualified applicants whose current address is outside the capital city. However, residents of the capital city are still eligible to apply.

Question: If I have taken the GRE/GMAT/TOEFL in the past, can I still request to take them again?

Answer: Yes, if you are not satisfied with the results of the examination or feel you can do better, then you may retake the exam when other semifinalists take the exam. Taking the test again does not erase your previous score. ETS reports all results to test score recipients (in this case IREX). If your test score is expired, you will need to re-take the exam(s). Please note, if you have previously taken the IELTS exam and have a valid score, you will still be required to sit for the TOEFL.

Question: If I am selected, which US host institution will I attend? Can I choose my host institution?

Answer: Fellows cannot choose their university placement. Finalists are placed at institutions that have officially applied to host Muskie fellows. Each fellow is assigned a placement at a regionally accredited institution in the United States based on academic fit and the fellow's abilities, including test scores and professional experience.

Question: When are the results of the competition announced, and when does the program begin?

Answer: All applicants will receive notification by May. Due to the volume of applications received, IREX does not forward explanations to applicants not selected as finalists. The program begins in August.

Question: If I am a finalist, can I take my family to the US? If yes, who is responsible for paying the associated living costs for them?

Answer: Yes, Muskie finalists can apply in October to bring their spouse or dependent children to the US on a J-2 visa. The fellow is responsible for paying all associated living costs for dependents. The final decision regarding the issuance of J-2 dependent visas is made by the Consular Section of the US Embassy or Consulate in the home country.

Question: How is the living stipend level determined?

Answer: The living stipend is determined by the US Department of State based on assessments of the cost of living for different parts of the United States.

Question: What expenses are covered by the program?

Answer: The Muskie program provides for the following: J-1 visa support; roundtrip travel from the fellow's home city to their host institution in the United States; tuition and mandatory university fees; health benefits plan; monthly allowance for living expenses; limited allowance for textbooks; a welcome workshop; and alumni networking opportunities.

Question: Can I work during my fellowship?

Answer: Fellows may apply for permission from IREX to work on-campus in positions related to their field of study for no more than 20 hours per week.

Question: What does the 'two-year home residency requirement' mean? Will I be able to visit my friends in the United States during this time?

Answer: The two-year home residency requirement stipulates that you cannot change your status to that of H, L, K or immigrant lawful permanent resident until you have returned to and resided in your home country for at least two years. However, you may visit the United States for short periods during that time on a tourist or business visa.